

# ESPON



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## ESPON DESIRE – Delivery of Essential Services in lagging REgions: Transferable Experiences from across Europe

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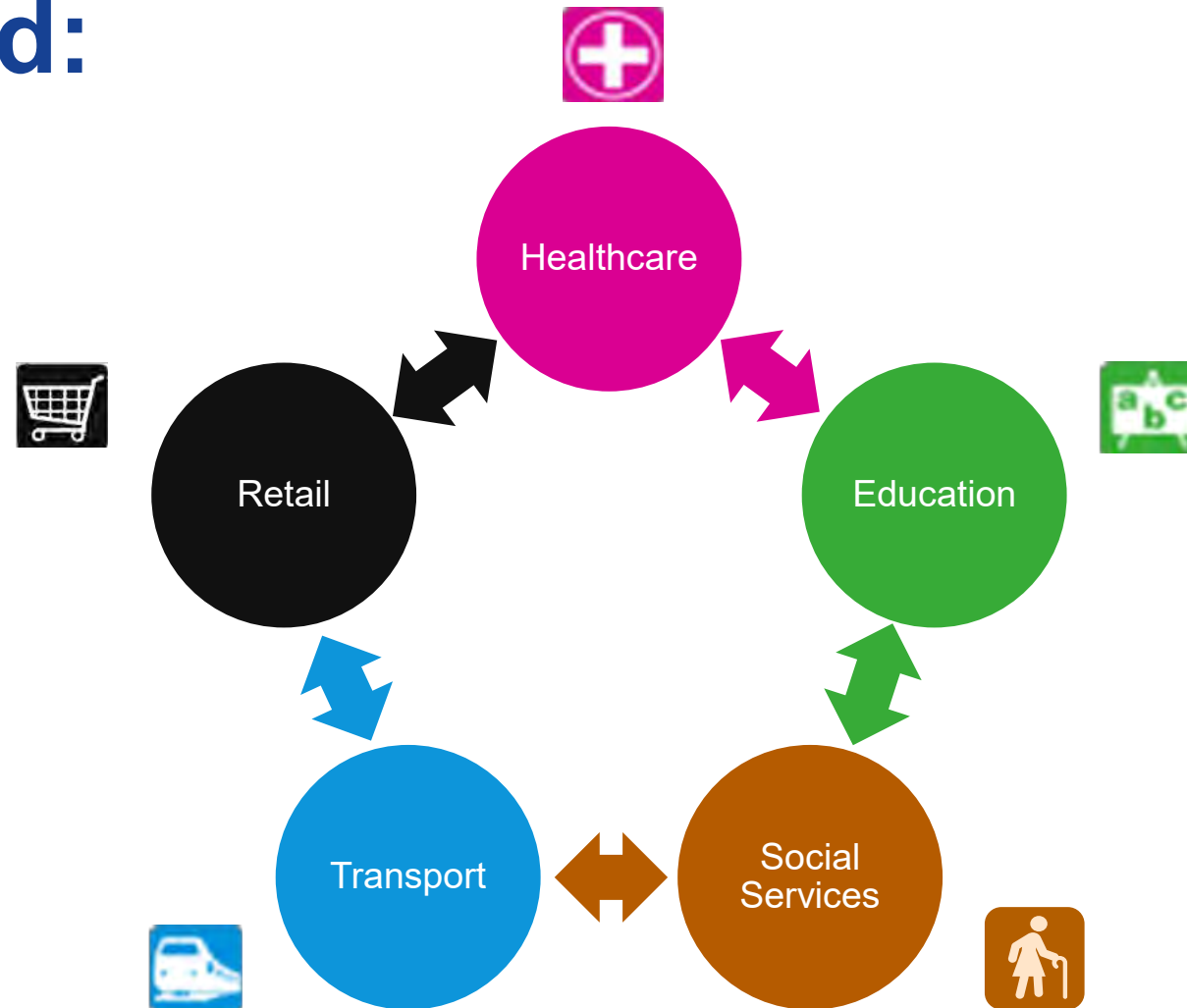
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# Introduction to ESPON DESIRE project

# Background of the research

- Access to essential services is a very important issue in European rural and regional policy (European Pillar of Social Rights, OECD Rural Studies report, 9th Cohesion Report)
- Shift on the policy vision for peripheral areas towards well-being and territorial inclusion
- Need of exploring alternative solutions, especially in lagging regions and other areas with special needs (unique combination of challenges)
- Diverse role of different actors in service provision: public sector, market-oriented approaches and hybrid realities (public/private/3rd sector).

# Services addressed:



# Key Aspects of ESPON DESIRE

- ✓ **Data analysis**
- ✓ **Short ‘good practices’**: 32 examples across 19 EU countries
- ✓ **In depth case studies: on the organisation of service provision in challenging circumstances** in 5 EU countries
- ✓ **Lessons learned**

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## How to adapt and innovate in local terms?

# Healthcare: key aspects and solutions

- Access to healthcare in sparse, remote, and mountainous areas is usually limited due to the reduced number of available facilities and the longer distances to hospitals in case of emergencies.
- Has a significant impact on service quality and places a burden on citizens.
- Need to deal with health in an integral way: out-of-the-box solutions to overcome sectoral approaches

# Healthcare: innovative examples

- **Mallu – The health care service car (Finland)**



*Source: Mikko Nikkinen and South Karelia Social and Health Care District, 2024.*

# Healthcare: innovative examples

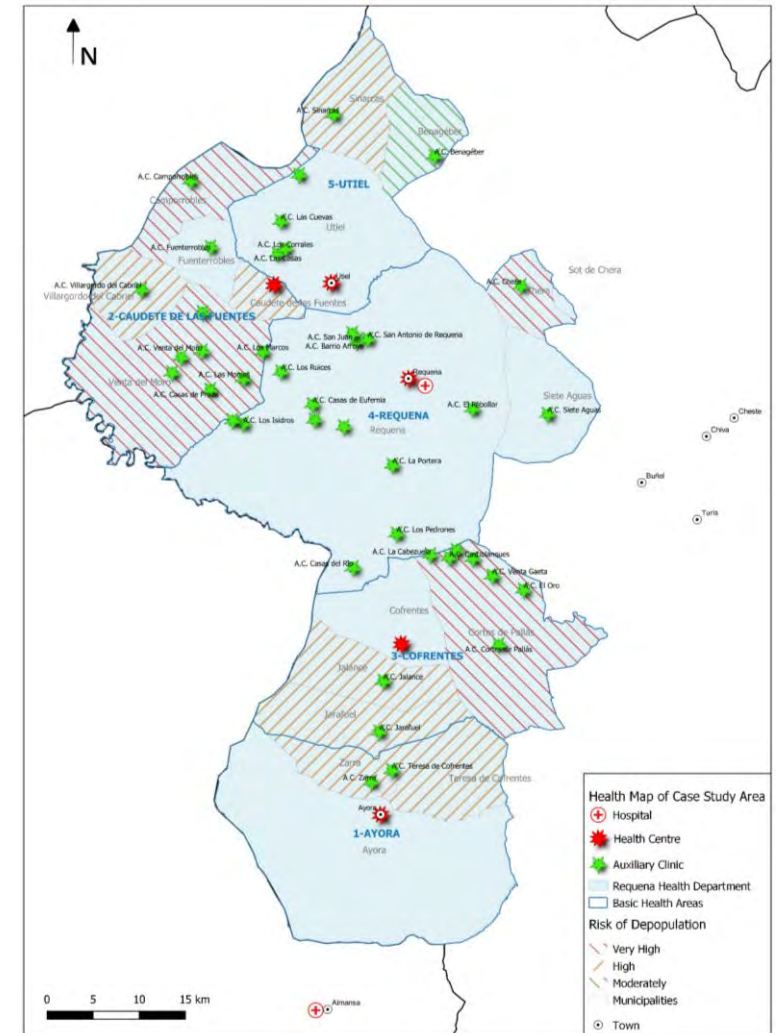
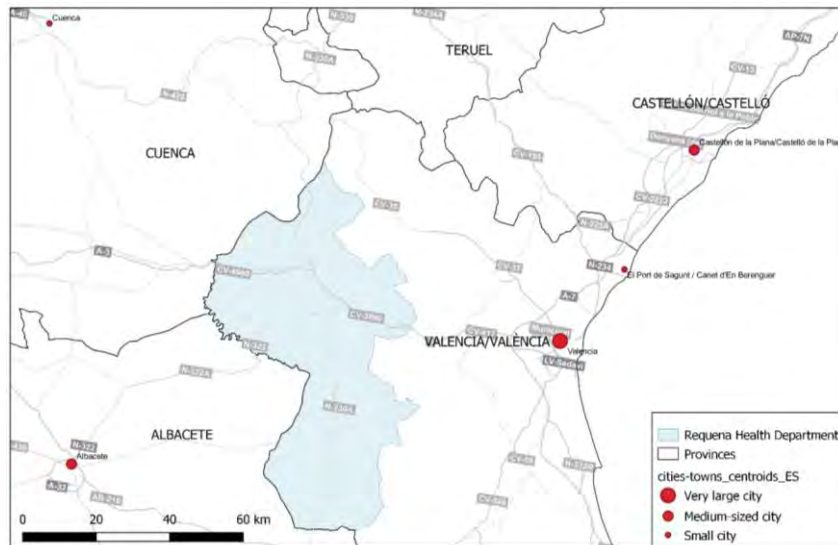
- **Virtual Health Rooms (Sweden)**



Source: Macrovector and Freepik, 2024

# Healthcare: innovative examples

- National Health System based in Primary Care (Comunidad Valenciana, Spain)



# Healthcare: key aspects and solutions

- **Getting health services closer to citizens:**
  - **Itinerant staff based or mobile health services** (including home services)
  - **Telemedicine, remote monitoring, and not in-preson interconsultation:** minimizing the need of hospital transfers
  - **Descentralised second-level care services:** many services can be provided by an itinerant medical cabinet.
  - **Transport provision** (in many cases no public transport)

# Healthcare: key aspects and solutions

- **Improving emergency attention in remote areas:**
  - Providing emergency **equipment and staff training for advanced vital support.**
  - Paired with **revision and optimisation** of communication protocols
  - Emergency training of a **network of volunteers** could also be a valuable tool.

# Healthcare: key aspects and solutions

- **Improving cooperation among actors:**
  - **Cross-border cooperation agreements (national or regional):** for emergency and regular care
  - **Coordination with social services:** a key challenge for rural areas or other areas with special needs.
  - **Continuity of care and longitudinality:** collaboration between healthcare providers, crucial considering a higher prevalence of ageing and chronic diseases

# Transport: key aspects and solutions

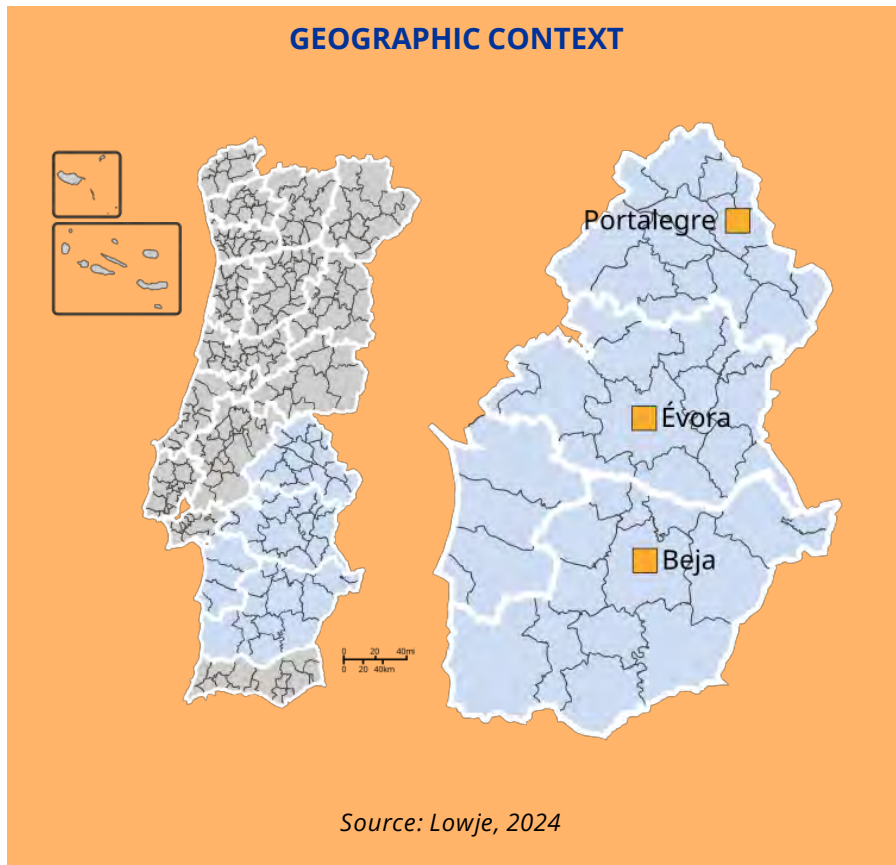
- Transport is a transversal service connecting dispersed people with other essential services.
- It increases attractiveness and territorial cohesion
- Important for environmental sustainability and a tool for strengthening the local economy
- It usually needs public support and funding, and in many cases offers limited options and operating hours.

# Transport: key aspects and solutions

- **Improving access to transport:**
  - **Favourable transport fees to target groups** : elderly, vulnerable, young, essential workers or employee mobility.
  - **Locally provided micro-transport systems:**
    - **Demand-responsive transport (DRT):** Door-to-door or “Pre-defined stops”
    - **Pre-bookable and last-minute bookings** (app with real-time information or by phone)
    - **Complementary services** integrated with public scheduled transport.
    - **Local taxi can be used**, avoiding direct competition.

# Transport: key aspects and solutions

- On-demand transport pilot project in Alentejo (Portugal) :

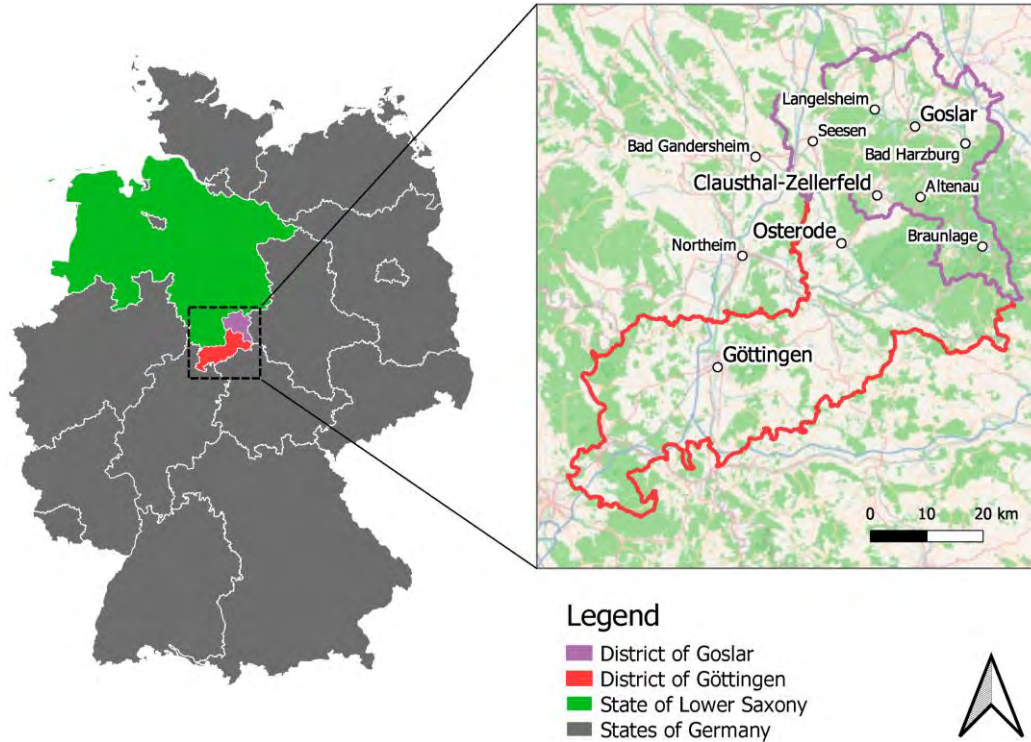


A total of 25 routes and 200 stops



# Transport: key aspects and solutions

- EcoBus project in rural Lower Saxony (Germany)



Source: Interreg Europe, 2024

Source: Source: Sørensen et al., 2021. Fig. 1 (page 8)

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## How to support policy development to improve essential services?

# Improving public service delivery in lagging regions:

- **Key aspects for transferability**

- Flexibility and scalability
- Sufficient technological readiness (telemedicine, ICT in education)
- Legal and policy support to overcome existing barriers.
- Sustainability of funding: initial investment, ongoing operation and public-private partnerships.
- Cross-sectoral collaboration
- Some initiatives require significant cultural and social adaptation or are context dependent
- Community involvement plays a critical role in moderately transferable options: importance of building local capacity and involving stakeholders in the transfer process

# Conclusions

- Transferring services to different contexts is a complex process but there are available alternatives.
- Understanding the interplay between technological infrastructure, community engagement, legal frameworks and local capacity is critical.

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// **Thank you**